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THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE.

When any organization comes to take a recognized place in the world of work, people at once ask the questions: "How did it come about? What was the origin of the work?"

A brief historical statement in regard to the origin of the Institute will therefore be of interest to the readers of the BIBLICAL WORLD.

A *Correspondence School of Hebrew* was announced in December, 1880, and the first lessons were mailed February 14, 1881, to twenty persons. The school numbered one hundred and fifty in September, 1881. During the following year, this number increased to about three hundred. During the summer of 1882, the course of study which had consisted of but one set of lessons, was reorganized, and arrangements completed for an Elementary and an Intermediate, as well as a Progressive Course. By September, 1883, the students in these various courses numbered about five hundred. During 1885 and 1886 an entirely new set of instruction sheets for the Elementary and Intermediate Courses were prepared. In the autumn of 1886, courses in Arabic and Assyrian were announced and classes organized. The first Advanced Course in Hebrew and the Aramaic Course date from the year 1887.

A *Summer School of Hebrew* was held in July, 1881, at Morgan Park, Ill., with an attendance of twenty-three. The second School was held in July, 1882, at the same place, with an attendance of sixty-five. In July and August, 1883, two schools were held, one at Morgan Park, with an attendance of eighty-five, and one at Chautauqua, N. Y., with an attendance of forty. In 1884, three Schools were held: the first at Morgan Park, the second at Chautauqua, the third at Worcester, Mass. In 1885, four Schools were held, viz., at Philadelphia, Pa., New Haven, Conn., Morgan Park, and Chautauqua. In 1886, Schools were held at Philadelphia, Morgan Park, Newton Centre, Mass., Chautauqua, and the University of Virginia, Va. The Schools of 1887 were at Philadelphia, Newton Centre, University of Virginia, Chautauqua, and Evanston, Ill., and had an aggregate membership of nearly three hundred. The Schools of 1888 were held at Newton Centre, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Ga., and Evanston, Ill., with about the same membership. In this year two Schools were held at Chautauqua, N. Y.; these, however, were not under the direct management of the Institute. In 1889, Schools were held at New Haven, Philadelphia, Chautauqua, and Evanston. From the very beginning there has been a widening of the scope of these Schools, so that instruction has been given not only in Hebrew, but also in the various cognate languages, the Versions, Old Testament Interpretation, and Old Testament Theology, and this has continued from year to year until the present time.

The Correspondence and Summer Schools of Hebrew were conducted solely as a personal undertaking by the Principal from the date of their beginning until January 1, 1883. At this time the responsibility of the Schools was assumed by a company of gentlemen incorporated as a joint-stock company. At a meeting of this company, held July, 1884, it was decided to abandon, so far as the company was concerned, the educational part of the work, September 1st. From this date until January 1, 1885, the Schools again reverted to the Principal.

During these months it was proposed to effect an organization of Professors of Hebrew, to whom the work should be committed. This plan was consummated December 31, 1884, and, at that date, the work was placed for five years under the management of the *American Institute of Hebrew*, which included in its membership about seventy of the Professors of Hebrew and Old Testament subjects in the United States and Canada.

At a meeting of the American Institute of Hebrew, June, 1889, at New Haven, Conn., it was voted that the Institute give up its work December 1, 1889. When this vote was passed, it was understood that another organization would assume the responsibility of the work at that time.

At a meeting of certain gentlemen held in New York City, October 12th, there was organized *The American Institute of Sacred Literature*. Under this name the Institution has steadily gained influence. Very soon the need of New Testament work was discovered and Correspondence Courses in New Testament Greek were prepared. These led quickly to Correspondence Courses in the English Bible, and thus the range was completed, and work brought within the reach of thousands who could not study Greek or Hebrew. The correspondence work took time, however, and the question came "What can be done for the busy people; those who *read* their Bibles, but have no plan or system in their work?" The question has been most happily answered in the two four-year schemes, the *Bible Students' Reading Guild*, and the *Bible Study Course for Organizations for Christian Work*. The Institute now comprises three district departments of work, each with its various subdivisions as follows: 1. The Correspondence School; 2. The Special Course department, including the Reading Guild, the Course for Organizations, and the Popular Examinations; 3. The School and Lecture work, covering Extension Lecture Courses, special "Institutes," and Summer Schools.

Through all these departments not less than five thousand students have come more or less definitely under the instruction of the Institute during the past year.

Remembering the independent platform of the organization, its interdenominational relations, its freedom from obligations to publishing houses, and, above all, the fact that it stands primarily for no school of criticism, as such, but accepts the best elements of both the liberal and conservative schools, the capability of constant influence in the religious world cannot be over-estimated.